

Town of Beesley's Point
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
U.S. Hwy. 9 on S edge of the
Great Egg Harbor, West of
Garden State Parkway
Beesley's Point
Cape May County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1048

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF BEESLEY'S POINT

HABS No. NJ-1048

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Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, U.S. Highway 9 on the Southern edge of the Great Egg Harbor Bay, West of the Garden State Parkway, Beesley's Point, Cape May County, New Jersey.

Significance: Beesley's Point, first settled in the seventeenth-century, was significant as the point of terminus for the ferry across the Great Egg Harbor, and the first public road in Cape May County.

History: The strip of land on the opposite side the Great Egg Harbor from Somers Point, was originally known as Goldin's Point, after an Irishman, William Goldin. During the second half of the eighteenth century, it was called Willet's Point, and even later Stites Point, undoubtedly after previous property owners. While connected by ferry to Somers Point in 1693, the first public road in Cape May County, connecting Beesley's Point and Cold Spring was not laid out for another fourteen years.¹ The proximity to both the ferry terminus and public road made this a perfect location for an inn. Nicholas Stillwell Sr. acquired a tavern license in 1750, though he was proprietor of the establishment two years earlier. Thomas Beesley, the town's namesake, was owner for a time in the very early nineteenth century. A second, larger hotel was erected across the road by Richard Stites in 1848-1849. The illustrious Henry Clay acquired this property in 1906 and rebuilt the hotel at that time. Neither of the old hotels still stands.² In 1835 Beesley's Point was described as a place where "visitors to the shore may find agreeable accommodations," having two taverns and "several" farmhouses available.³

The ferry remained the only means of vehicular transport across the bay until a toll bridge was erected in 1927. The Garden State Parkway built a parallel span in the mid-1950s, which was one of the final links in that north to south thoroughfare. Today, Beesley's point is mostly residential neighborhoods of single family homes; a few antique stores and shops line Route 9. Situated between the two bridges, the Tuckahoe Inn recalls the history of taverns at this site. The view from the Inn's dock provides a summary of area development; a deteriorating neoclassical mansion stands alongside a Jet ski rental shop and the tower of the Atlantic Electric B.L. England Generating Station, disguised as a lighthouse, looms over pine forests. Despite the Route 9 traffic, Beesley's Point has left roadside commercialization to nearby Marmora and other towns further south.

¹ George F. Boyer and J. Pearson Cunningham, Cape May County Story (Egg Harbor City: Laureate Press, 1975), 62; William McMahon, South Jersey Towns: History and Legend (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 143-44.

² McMahon, 147-48.

³ Thomas F. Gordon, Gazeteer of the State of New Jersey (Trenton: Daniel Fenton, 1834; reprint, [place...?]: Polyanthos, 1973), 97; John L. Kay and Chester M. Smith, Jr., New Jersey Postal History (Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1977), 51.

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HABS Historian
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- Sources: Boyer, George F., and Cunningham, J. Pearson. Cape May County Story. Avalon: Avalon Publishing Co., 1975.
- Gordon, Thomas F. Gazeteer of the State of New Jersey. Trenton: Daniel Fenton, 1834; reprint, Polyanthos, 1973.
- Kay, John L., and Smith, Chester M., Jr. New Jersey Postal History. Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1977.
- McMahon, William. South Jersey Towns: History and Legend. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973.
- Sebold, Kimberly, and Sara Amy Leach. Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail: Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991.

Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.